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Black Lives Matter: An analysis of Social-Political Activism in Social Media

An Undergraduate Honors Thesis  
Submitted in Partial fulfillment of  
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### **Abstract**

Using the contexts of institutionalized racism, ideological dogmatism, and oppression of people of color, this paper will argue the following hypothesis in regards to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and social media activism. People who post on social media about social-political issues have positive relationships with boycotting, protesting, or attending political meetings outside of the online sphere. However, this positive relationship does not correlate to a positive relationship or engagement in regards to their feelings on BLM movement, discrimination of blacks, and police treatment of blacks. If this is the case, then the data for social media postings will demonstrate a clear relationship between the activism online to the activism outside of the digital realm. This paper serves to underscore the infectious nature of institutionalized racism and its mal effect on social-political activism. Results show that there is a positive relationship between those who post on social media about social-political issues and people who participate in boycotting, protesting, or attending political meetings outside of the online sphere. There is no relationship between posting about social-political issues online and their feelings on BLM. Finally, there is a positive relationship between those who post on social media about social-political issues on discrimination of blacks and police treatment of blacks.

The analysis that follows in this paper will provide context of the institutionalized racism of the United States from slavery through the Civil Rights Movement. It will also define and determine ideological dogmatism for continued discrimination of people of color. The analysis will discuss the modern oppression of minority groups, as well as introduce BLM as a social media phenomenon. Ultimately, this paper will explore the BLM movement's relationship to social media use and individuals' social-political activism.

Key Words: Black Lives Matter, Social Movements, Slacktivism, Online Activism, Social Media, Social-political Participation, and Ferguson

The United States was built upon the backs of black bodies: from the 17<sup>th</sup> century slave trade to the industrialization of the American economy during the 19<sup>th</sup> century; from the segregation and mass incarceration of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to the police brutality and civil injustices of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Capitalism was the justification for the exploitative use of human life for profit and economic growth. Institutionalized racism propagated and reinforced capitalism's oppressive forces. Jorge L.A. Garcia (1996, p.32) states, "To become institutionalized, racism must infect the institution's operations by informing the end it adopts, or the means it employs, or the grounds on which it accepts undesirable side effects ... or the assumption on which it works." Thus, institutionalization racism has flourished throughout the United States within the societal structures it infects.

Using the contexts of institutionalized racism, ideological dogmatism, and oppression of people of color, this paper will argue the following hypothesis in regards to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and social media activism. People who post on social media about social-political issues have positive relationships with boycotting, protesting, or attending political meetings outside of the online sphere. However, this positive relationship does not correlate to a positive relationship or engagement in regards to BLM, discrimination of blacks, and police treatment of blacks. If this is the case, then the data for social media postings will demonstrate a clear relationship between the activism online to the activism outside of the digital realm. This paper serves to underscore the infectious nature of institutionalized racism and its mal effect on social-political activism.

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will discuss the modern oppression of minority groups, as well as introduce BLM as a social media phenomenon. Ultimately, this paper will explore the BLM movement's relationship to social media use and individuals' social-political activism.

### **Context with Slavery**

Plantation owners had crops to maintain and their only method of successful, profitable production was with the human body. Men, women, and children became subhuman through their mechanization and use as slaves. People were stripped of their African culture. They were objectified and dehumanized. The body became an object for purchase to work the earth and produce offspring (Wood 1987, p. 383). Subjugating human life was government-sponsored capitalism (Wood 1987, p. 382). The judicial system surrounding slavery promoted capital punishment of slaves instead of incarceration. Wood (1987, p. 382) states, "Whilst removing offenders from circulation, would not have been in the best economic interests of their owners or, for that matter, of white society at large." In 1865, Congress abolished the legal institution of slavery, the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments were ratified, and the Civil Rights Act of 1866 were established, yet the system of discrimination was ever present (Reskin 2012, p. 24).

Slavery was replaced by other methods of discrimination in the form of Jim Crow laws and the federal supported mandate of "separate but equal" (Reskin 2012, p. 24). Reskin (2012, p. 25) states by 1964, the federal government began to end the racial discrimination found within employment, housing, and education. While the federal government was attempting to dismantle a system of oppression through institutions such as housing, employment, education, and voting, the "system" was unable to end the prejudicial thoughts and discriminatory actions of the white majority.

### **Ideological Dogmatism**

Corlett (1998, p. 29) argues that ideological dogmatism is a basis of racism that fuels itself. Corlett (1998, p. 29) explores ideological dogmatism by analyzing the underlying motives of the Woman's Suffrage Movement. During the movement, Cady Stanton demanded that the rights of women be established before the enfranchisement of men of color (Stanton 1881, p. 214). Stanton claims that if a "colored man" receives the right to vote, then men of color will side with the oppressor or the "despotic government" (Stanton 1881, p. 214). Stanton's ideas were only reinforced by fellow suffragist Susan B. Anthony who also demanded that the National American Woman Suffrage Association remain silent on the issue of racism in America (Corlett 1998, p. 30). The racism of the Suffrage movement is apparent, yet goes ignored when one believes their actions benefit the greater good. One hundred years later, civil rights activist and feminist, Audre Lorde (1984, p.110) answered the racism of ideological dogmatism by declaring:

For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those women who still define the master's house as their only source of support.

Lorde argues that in order to change and dismantle systems of oppression, individuals cannot use the same tools of the oppressor that were once used against them. Tools of the oppressor only continue the oppression of disadvantage. Protest was the core method the suffragettes used in order to obtain voting rights. This method has been used by organizations during the Civil Rights Movement such as Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), in addition to countless other organizations. These efforts have manifested themselves as national protests and rallies for desegregation of the military, public spaces, and

entitlement programs. Taylor (2016, 174) questions that the actions and results of the past have landed our nation in a post-racial society. Is this all to say, that the United States has recovered from its history of discrimination and prejudice?

### **21<sup>st</sup> Century Oppression and Black Lives Matter**

In 2008, the American people and the Electoral College elected the first African-American to be president of the United States of America (Demby, 2017). Has the United States recovered from its history of discrimination and prejudice? Do we in fact live in a post-racial society?

The United States has not fully recovered from slavery as the nation has continued its practice of subjugating human life to economic, social, and political inequalities. The United States 2010 Census determined that 22% of blacks live below the poverty line, which is over double the rate of their white counterparts (Long, 2015). In 2014, 34% of 6.8 million people in corrections are African Americans (NAACP, 2014). Black women are two times more likely to be imprisoned than white women. During the 2016 elections, 4% of people of color ran as Republican candidates, and only 11% of men of color and 6% of women of color ran as Democratic candidates (Lardieri, 2016). Taylor (2016, p. 302) states, “black college graduates are even more than twice as likely to be unemployed as white college graduates.” In 2015, the Guardian reported that the “final total of people killed by US police officers in 2015 shows the rate of death for young black men was five times higher than white men of the same age” (The Guardian, 2015). The historical context of race relations has not triggered the United States government to act against the oppressive nature of race-based poverty, employment, education, and politics. Once again, people of color and their allies have challenged the United States



government by asking the predetermined value of a black body through coordinated action. One of these movements is known as Black Lives Matter.

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement was cultivated after the death of Trayvon Martin and the acquittal of his killer George Zimmerman in 2013 (Ince et. al). Social movements can be defined as “organizational structures and strategies that may empower oppressed populations to mount effective challenges and resist the more powerful and advantaged elites” (Deric, 2011). Movements are different from campaigns as there never truly an end result. The process is continual, as the movement grapples with concepts beyond politics such as interpersonal relationships, including group participation and involvement. BLM was founded by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi after they had learned that Martin’s killer was not going to be held accountable for murdering a child. Garza went to her Facebook and posted a love letter to the black community and her black family. She ended her post with “Black people. I love you. I love us. Our lives matter.” (Day, 2015). Her post was a call to action for people of color to no longer stand idle while men and women such as Mike Brown, Eric Garner, Rekia Boyd, Sean Bell, and Amadou Diallow are victims of police brutality (Taylor 2016, p. 350). Cullors shared Garza’s post with her friends, with the use of #BlackLivesMatter and they contacted organizer Tometi to begin the “Black Lives Matter Movement” (Day, 2015). Through direct action such as protests, die-ins, and university student movements, BLM promotes and affirms the following:

“The Black Lives Matter Global Network is a chapter-based, member-led organization whose mission is to build local power and to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes. We are working for a world where Black lives are no longer systematically targeted for demise. We affirm our humanity, our contributions to this society, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression. The call for Black lives to matter is a rallying cry for ALL Black lives striving for liberation” (“About”, Black Lives Matter).

The forty chapters have been created through the connection of social media: Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr, and grassroots organizing (“About”, Black Lives Matter). The state of Nebraska does not have a BLM chapter, but that did not stop the people at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln from participating in a BLM rally (“Find a Chapter”, 2018).

On November 19, 2015 the Afrikan People’s Union with students Gloria Kimbulu and Dannielle Young coordinated a BLM rally which took place on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln’s campus green space. This event was held in conjunction with BLM (BLM) protests all across the United States. The rally was promoted on a public Facebook page that encouraged the community of Lincoln to come together in peaceful protest (Dunker, 2015). The protest was sparked by the sister-protests happening at the University of Missouri due their administration ignoring and inadvertently supporting the discrimination people of color on the Mizzou campus (Plaster, 2015). However, the BLM rally caused great controversy within the community of Lincoln, the University, and the Movement. This controversy played out on the public Facebook page (Facebook, 2015). The controversy was much like the #AllLivesMatter counter movement rhetoric that occurs in the nation when the #BlackLivesMatter movement sparks media or community interest (Olasav, “All Lives Matter”). Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor articulates the issue that the counter movement abides in. Taylor (2016, p.1511, 1517, 1521) states,

Colorblindness [#AllLivesMatter] has become the default setting for how Americans understand how race and racism works...Colorblindness is a critical weapon in the arsenal of the politically powerful and economic elite to divide those who have an interest in uniting to make demands on the state and capital to provide the means for a decent quality of life”

The coordinators used social media in order to garner support for a social issue, which resulted in physical participation from Lincolniters. However, how many said they would show up and support the Black Lives Matter Movement and chose to remain silent? To what degree did the

counter movement generate politically active participants online and in actualization? In order to answer the posed questions, understanding social desirability bias in voter turnout will help to understand the social desirability bias found in social movement turnout and the emotional response to BLM.

### **Social Desirability**

Social desirability bias is the concept that a person will make a decision based on social perceptions of what is an acceptable answer for fear of social rejection. Social desirability bias is found in polls where respondents purposefully throw off surveys and data (Gray et. al., 2016). Self-reporting surveys and in-person polling tends to overestimate voter turnout due to social desirability bias (Holobrook and Krosnick, 2010). Respondents want to appear that they have satisfied their civic duty by voting, or even soothe “unpopular attitudes” about racism and antisemitism (Ong and Weiss 2000). Respondents, whether true or not, will say they will vote, do not use methamphetamine, or have a swastika tattoo because they want to maintain a socially accepted status as a citizen. The modern perception is that most people were supportive of Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK); however, a 1963 survey suggested that 41% of Americans rated MLK as “totally favorable” and 16% as “highly favorable” (Weigel, 2011). The Gallup poll found that 60% of Americans disapproved of the March on Washington for fears it would result in violence (Roper Center, Cornell U.) It is quite difficult to determine how much social desirability bias played out in people’s surveys for fears they would be looked down upon for their racism. The same question was asked in August of 2011, and Gallup determined that 94% of Americans surveyed found MLK to be “totally favorable” and 69% “highly favorable” (Weigel, 2011). Not only was MLK a civil rights activist that spoke of integration, voting rights,

and economic redistribution, he was gaining criticism for his anti-Vietnam war and U.S. imperialism efforts (Weigel, 2011, Berman, 2013, & Bruyneel 2014).

In March of 2014, a Gallup survey determined that “60% of whites and 55% of blacks believe race relations to be good” (Roper Center, 2018). Van Dijk argues because it is impossible to gauge peoples’ denials and admissions that at least some of the surveyed could be influenced by the social desirability bias (Van Dijk 2010). In regards to the Gallup survey on race relations Paul Herrnson states, “Although things have been trending in a positive direction the evidence suggests that change comes slowly and public opinion is sensitive to politics and other events” (Roper Center, 2018). However, a method of tracking online social media in a quantitative manner via Twitter posts has shown to be reflective of the population’s social-political participation (DiGrazia et. al., 2013). Indexing online social media outlet posts aids in the resolution of over and underreporting of surveys. Therefore, indexing tweets from Twitter help social movements, government agencies, and corporations to understand to coordinate opinions about social-political events without the social desirability bias. Because people are updating their posts with their personal opinions, the likelihood that social desirability bias is reduced as persons are only catering to their family and friends, and not to the Gallup survey. In order to understand activists’ online involvement with physical involvement, the historical context of the civil rights movement will be analyzed.

### **Civil Rights Movement and Social Media**

During the Freedom Rides, 61% of those surveyed stated that they disapproved of Riders’ activism. On May 14, 1961, the freedom riders were replacing a slashed tire on their bus and the bus was firebombed by members of the Ku Klux Klan and the passengers were severely beaten (Arsenault, 2006). Day after day, they were challenged by law enforcement, white supremacists,

and the average American. Understanding the social desirability bias might be playing a role the surveyed responses, the majority were not in favor of the Riders actions. It only took a few Klansman to physically assault the Riders as they attempted to end their activism. Physical violence is at the core of the Civil Rights Movement, and the reason BLM reverberates throughout social media. Today, violence is not only happening in the real world but on the internet.

Social media platforms allow for people to resist multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is “the view that cultures, races, and ethnicities, particularly those of minority groups, deserve special acknowledgement of their differences within a dominant political culture” (Eagan, 2018). Cleland (2014) states, “The overall findings are that social media sites such as fan message boards have allowed racist thoughts to flourish online, in particular by rejecting multiculturalism and Islam through the presentation of whiteness and national belonging and an outright hostility and resistance toward the Other.” Message boards allow for commenters to maintain a certain level of invisibility, therefore, reducing their need to satisfy the social desirability bias usually found in surveys regarding multiculturalism. These areas in which commenters are allowed to “resist the other” have generated safe places where commenters’ thoughts will not be challenged. This group is known as a non-institutional racist network. While the governmental structures may not be in support of racism, online users participate in racial bigotry much like the KKK does in the physical world (Corlett 1996, p.27). Hartzell (2018, p.23) states through group talk, white focus groups establish coded language that creates an “us and them” rhetoric that allows the participants to “crystalize stereotypes” and exacerbate racial difference. When outsiders do not challenge their conversations pertaining to multiculturalism, the white groups are allowed to maintain their racist lingo and stereotypes. Conversations on racial minorities and immigrants are

happening in person and online that “toe the line” between “acceptance and tolerance” and “resentment and distrust” (van Dijk 2010). This encourages racism to flourish online on message boards such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram and leads to the cultivation of alt-right movements. The Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville on August 12, 2017 is one example. White Nationalists were able to coordinate online and put their unchallenged rhetoric to the test by using violence against protesters advocating for the removal of Confederate statues (Astor et al, 2017).

Indexing tweets encouraged Ince et. al (2017) to track the patterns of online activists regarding social movements. Ince et. al. tracked the hashtag “#BlackLivesMatter” (#BLM) with the events that followed the shooting of Trayvon Martin and the acquittal of George Zimmerman in 2013. Ince et. al., tracked commentary and tweets pertaining to #BLM. This method of collecting data helped develop the BLM by articulating tweeters’ goals and objectives. For example, tweets initially went from grievances to tactical methods for developing change. Users would comment on police violence such as #ICantBreathe or #HandsUpDontShoot and resulted in tactical conversation hashtagged #shutitdown or #blackoutfriday. Ince et. al. (2017) defined that framing of social movements, such as BLM, will continue to develop when “specific grievances that attract the attention of activists to a more mature phase where grievances recede in importance to tactics and policy change.” Ince et. al.’s research only reinforces the findings of Raine et. al (2012) who indicates that “38% of those who use social networking sites or Twitter use those social media to ‘like’ or promote material related to politics or social issues that others have posted.” These two research studies indicate that people are politically active on social media. These studies do not indicate whether participants are physically active in the real world. It is one thing to retweet a BLM post and it is another thing to show up to a BLM rally or to sign

a petition. Holbrook and Krosnick's (2010) research emphasizes the idea that people want to appear as if they have satisfied their civic duty; appearance of activity is different than real physical participation.

Ince et. al's study is unable to analyze whether the tweets that articulate tactical methods of developing a movement are attained through physical action such as showing up to a rally or boycotting goods and services. Because of the absence of information, this paper poses the questions within the United States: does the perception of someone's social participation on social media in response to a grievance result in tactics and policy change? Does the social desirability bias of social participation on social media cause individuals to support issues through tactical methods beyond posting to Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram? Finally, how does social participation on social media cause support of the social movement BLM?

The creation of social media outlets such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have encouraged people to engage in politics through public and private discourse. Specifically through Twitter, people use hashtags to promote or challenge certain issues, and consequently can have a multi-channel dialogue about key social issues. This technology has created a viable network for social issues to develop into movements creating "logical coordination" among supporters (Seegerberg and Bennett, 2011). Regarding tactical approaches, Malcolm Gladwell (2010) argues that systematic change will not happen via social media outlets because when the digital network becomes strained, political commitment is diminished. Gladwell states social media connections are based upon "follows" and "likes" that are distant and require little activity. Therefore Gladwell argues this, with the consciousness of the Civil Rights Movement, and the traditional tactics used to bring about the Voting Rights Act of 1965, are the most effective. For example, a hierarchal organizational structure is lost on social media networks as

there are no “rules and procedures.” Therefore, decisions cannot be made collectively and the connection to the social movement in its entirety is lost. Jussi Parikka (2010) claims that Gladwell ignores the ability for “evolving collective action” via networking (p.199). Parikka continues that the political terrain via Twitter is only beginning to be explored. Therefore, Twitter’s platform for social activism is happening within the current and immediate social-political contexts. Because of this, ideas are changing with every character added to the 140-word count posts. As Ince et al established, grievances such as #ICantBreathe turned into #BlackoutFriday. People are able to logically coordinate of an event instantaneously. For example, on January 21, 2015, BLM members staged a “die in” on the Capitol Hill Cafeteria. Immediately, people were tweeting about the incident and it was shared among users and on news stations (Wesley, 2015). Gladwell and Parikka’s conflicting arguments indicate that the understanding of the role of Twitter and social media outlets in social movements is unclear, undefined, and evolving.

Today, social media is playing a huge role in how many participate in politics. As DiMaggio et al. (2001) states, social media use and political participation is no longer an incredulous method of participation. Previous to DiMaggio’s analysis, social media use was considered a limited form of political and social participation (p. 319). DiMaggio concludes that the literature behind participation is at a point of “gradual realization that Web-based human interaction really does have unique and politically significant properties” (p. 319). Dennis McCafferty (2011, p. 18) asserts that social media use is a natural advancement of media use since the televised protests of the 1960s. During the 1960s, it was difficult for activists to become immediately informed of an incident of violence or the political action of a government agency.



They were dependent upon group networks: radio, television, conversation, letters, and telephone (Gladwell, 2010). However, this is in high contrast to the social media accessibility of the 2000s.

After the Iranian elections in 2009, Twitter was used as a platform for coordinating protests. This medium of communication was so important to Iranian protesters that the United States government requested that Twitter reschedule an update in order for protesters to remain in constant conversation (Burns and Eltham, 2009, 299). At the time, Twitter users were able to do more advanced reporting than the conventional news conglomerates. Fighting authoritarian regimes in Iran via a social media outlet might lose its appeal when the government begins to crackdown on Twitter users. Conversely in the United States, Twitter can be used to express coordinated levels of free expression which might lead to personal restriction of political participation. This analysis indicates that civil engagement in regards to social movements requires a direct connection of support (i.e., social media networks) (Meyer, 2007). However, what happens when political participation is not triggered after a user is actively online?

Christensen (2011) argues “slacktivism” is the premise that one’s political participation has limited impact and therefore only has a “feel-good” factor. Christensen’s claim is reinforced by DiMaggio et al.’s analysis of political participation. DiMaggio et al states because participation requires effort in information gathering it is easier to “free-ride on the civic attentiveness of others” (p.320). Therefore, social media users may be politically active online by responding to other’s posts, commentary, and action but are they active in the real physical world? Christensen’s interpretation of activism claims that activism ends on Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, or other social media sites. Christensen argues that there is no clear method for determining internet action and real-life participation. Christensen did not evaluate Twitter’s index of tweets during periods of protest such as that of Ince et al’s study. Therefore, by proving

or disproving the hypothesis of persons engaging in social movements on social media, and whether individuals pursue physical participation, there is not clear method of collecting data on slacktivism.

Understanding the social participation on social media as individuals support issues through tactical methods such as boycotting goods and services, signing a petition, or participating in a rally beyond posting to Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram will help highlight the consequences of remaining silent and how this silence translates to inaction. This study will highlight the difference between people willing to share their opinions on social issues on social media and those willing to physically participate within those social issues. Putnam (1995) argues that the internet limits civic duties because the internet's main function is for entertainment, social interactions, and search for information. Putnam is not wrong in his analysis because the charming quality of the internet is that it is entertaining and easily accessible. These qualities are key to social movement building. However, Putnam ignores the key function of modern civil political engagement. Twitter combines entertainment, social interaction, and information searching. Boulianne (2009) indicates through a meta-analysis that the internet does not necessarily reduce civil engagement, but does not encourage civil engagement. Is it possible this analysis is incorrect?

By analyzing social movement participation online and in person, it will provide information on social movements themselves. This is beneficial in understating the role of institutional racism and ideological dogmatism in people's engagement online and in the real physical world. Application wise, tracking indexes of tweets of social movements allows politicians and government agencies who are working in the interests of the people to promote campaigns and politicians' agendas that corresponded with voters needs (O'Hara, 2013).

Tracking indexes of tweets can have its benefits and consequences. Beneficially, politicians can ascertain general issues valued by voters such as police brutality, income disparities, and mass incarceration. People favor the BLM movement, and then these respondents would be in favor of civil rights reform; which is another avenue of representation of the people. However, tracking indexed tweets requires that the commonalities in question represent the democratic majorities' best interest. By misinterpreting this data, anyone can say anything to anyone that does not deserve merit in the political sphere. For example, it could be argued that this is playing out on the presidential stage with Donald Trump at the helm of his Twitter account. President Trump has access to an entire political party via his Twitter platform. He has the authority to favor certain opinions and ideals. People have access to these tweets and have the ability to express similar opinions. This in turn may be detrimental to a democratic institution where specific ideals hold undue merit (i.e., #CorruptHillary, #FakeNews, or #MAGA).

Social issues such as healthcare, women's health rights, immigration reform, and police brutality have increasingly been the focus of political parties and campaigns. These social issues have shown to be more polarizing (DiMaggio et. al. 1996). Polarization on the federal level appears as legislative gridlock. This gridlock devastates Congress's ability to pass any kind of legislative agenda. By looking at social desirability bias within social movements online versus in-person activity will demonstrate what the voters are truly passionate about. This passion is what fuels political parties in garnering votes from undecided individuals. President Barack Obama's 2008 campaign relied on social media to "raise funds, attract volunteers, and publicize campaign events" (Cohen, 2008). Obama's campaign was not only able to send a message to voters but was able to engage them in activities. These activities encouraged grassroots participation in the supporters' homes, neighborhoods, and states (Chang, 2010). His campaign

thrived on the individual stories of personal struggle and achievement. He invited supporters to share their stories on his website and other social media platforms, and this in fact built empathy among other supporters (Chang, 2010). In return, Obama would invite a select four to dine with him and his family. This system of social media and presidential campaigning was replicated in the 2016 presidential campaign. Gross and Johnson (2016) determine that Twitter is a free and accessible platform that can be used to persuade undecided voters (p. 755). Therefore, social media is changing not only how citizens engage in politics and social issues, but how politicians engage with citizens and running their campaigns.

In 2016, Deen Freelon developed an analysis of the impact of Twitter on the BLM movement. Freelon categorized the Twittersphere that encountered a variation of Black Lives Matter or #BLM into five distinct sections: BLM (activists of color) Anonymous/Bipartisan Report (hacktivists), Black Entertainers (Kanye, Kerry Washington, Kobe Bryant etc.), Conservatives (Sean Hannity, Fox News, the Blaze), Mainstream News (CBS, Reuters, BuzzFeed, etc.), and Young Black Twitter (“Twitter’s mediation of Black cultural discourse”). Freelon analyzed these five groups by looking at nine important incidences throughout the short history of BLM such as Michael Brown and the Birth of a Movement, Ferguson’s Aftermath, Officer Darren Wilson’s Non-Indictment (fatally shot unarmed Michael Brown), Officer Daniel Pantaleo’s Non-Indictment (suffocated Eric Garner), Movement Expansion, Walter Scott (unarmed black man shot by Police Officer Michael Slager), and Freddie Gray (experienced fatal trauma to his spinal cord at the hand of six Baltimore police officers). Freelon (2016, p. 5) measured 40.8 million tweets, 100,000 web link, and 40 interviews with BLM activists and determined that it is unclear as to whether the movement would be as successful without social media . BLM was able to engage people in educational dialogue and actively challenge

perceptions of police brutality. People of color maintained the conversation, and their story was not co-opted by non-white participants. The movement appealed to the “moral sensitivities” of non-activists. Freelon notes that the movement was successful, and would not have reached the mass media and the international audiences if there was not engagement from the five previous mentioned groups. Freelon (2016, p.5) identified two forms of expression about BLM:

“expressions of awe and disbelief at the violent police reactions to the Ferguson protests, and conservative admissions of police brutality in the Eric Garner and Walter Scott cases.”

Therefore, it would be keen to understand if Twitter users have the ability to mobilize and physically participate in social movements.

The hypothesis being tested is that social participation on social media is positively related to civic and political engagement. People who post on social media about social-political issues have a positive relationships with boycotting, protesting, or attending a political meeting. However, people who post on social media about social-political issues have a negative relationship to feelings regarding BLM, discrimination of blacks, and police treatment of blacks due to institutionalized racism and possibly ideological dogmatism. If this is the case, then the information for social media postings will show a relationship between the activism online to the activism in actualization.

## **Methods**

In order to test the hypothesis, the 2016 American NES pre-election and postelection surveys will be analyzed (N = 4,271). The dual-pronged study was both the face to face survey (n=1,181) and surveys that were conducted online (n = 3,090). The pre-election surveys were conducted from September 7 through November 7, 2016. For the post-election survey, many of the respondents were re-interviewed from November 9 through January 8, 2017. The respondents

had to be 18 or older, living in United States or the District of Columbia. The American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) formula indicates that the pre-election interview response rate was 50 percent for face-to-face interviews. The AAPOR formula indicates that the pre-election interview response rate was 44 percent for the internet surveys. The postelection response for face to face interviews was 90 percent, and the online surveys response was 84 percent (ANES, “Use Guide”). The variable M represents mean, “The statistical mean refers to the mean or average that is used to derive the central tendency of the data in question. It is determined by adding all the data points in a population and then dividing the total by the number of points. The resulting number is known as the mean or the average” (“Statistical Mean”, techopedia.com). The variable SD represents the standard deviation, which is the statistic that tells you how tightly all the various examples are clustered around the mean in a set of data (Niles, 2018).

### **Social Media Use**

The first group of analysis is social media use outside of political involvement. This will give an insight to people’s initial levels of social media use and therefore will give a base level of social media use. First the respondents were asked, “Do you have a Facebook account that you have used in the past month, a Facebook account you have not used in the past month, or do you not have a Facebook account?” 1. Yes, have a Facebook account I have used in the past month (47.11%). 2. Have a Facebook account but have not used it in the past month (7.54%). 3. No, do not have a Facebook account (28.17%) (M= .37 SD = 3.22) (ANES, “Use Guide”).

### **Posting Political Messages on Social Media**

The second question posed and analyzed were respondents’ frequency to post about political information on social media. The question posed, “During the past 12 months, have you

ever posted a message on Facebook or Twitter about a political issue, or have you never done this in the past 12 months?” 1. Have done this in the past 12 months (28.33%) 2. Have not done this in the last 12 months (57.04%) ( $M=.52$   $SD=2.8$ ). Because this paper serves to look beyond Internet use, the following question is based on the internet and that is why it includes on posting political messages. The respondents were asked, “During the past 12 months, have you signed a petition on the Internet or on paper about a political issue, or have you not done this in the past 12 months?” 1. Have done this in the past 12 months (20.77%).

2. Have not done this in the past 12 months (64.62%) ( $M=.60$   $SD=2.82$ ) (ANES, “Use Guide”).

These two variables will look at respondents’ ability to be politically active online and therefore will have certain weight on their social-political activism. The respondent’s answers imply that most are not politically active on social media. However, of those respondents that are politically active on social media, how does this correlate to political and social activity in the real world?

### **Social-Political Activism**

This set of questions digs into the respondents’ social-political activism beyond internet use. These variables look at boycotting, protesting, participating in political rallies, and the use of campaign materials. The question posed, “In the past 12 months, how often have you either bought or declined to buy a certain product or service because of social-political values of the company that provides it?” 1. Never (36.81%) 2. Once in a while (28.05%) 3. About half of the time (8.73%) 4. Most of the time (7.56%) 5. All of the time (3.86) ( $M=.76$   $SD=3.11$ ). The next question to be analyzed was the respondents’ protest activity: “During the past 12 months, have you jointed in a protest march, rally, or demonstration, or have you not done this in the past 12 months?” 1. Yes (6.09%) 2. No (79.33%) ( $M=.75$   $SD=2.86$ ). The respondent’s answers imply that most are not politically active on social media. However, of those respondents that are

politically active on social media, how does this correlate to political and social activity in the real world? The next question pertains to campaign materials, “Did you wear a campaign button, put a campaign sticker in your car, or place a sign in your window or in front of your house?” 1. Yes (10.33%) 2. No (75.09). (ANES, “Use Guide”).

### **Black Lives Matter**

The feeling thermometer was used to ask the following questions and the scale is as follows: 0 degrees, 15 degrees quite cold or unfavorable feeling, 30 degrees fairly cold or unfavorable feelings, 40 degrees a bit more cold or unfavorable feeling, 50 degrees no feeling at all, 60 degrees a bit more warm or favorable than cold feeling, 70 degrees fairly warm or favorable feeling, 85 degrees quite warm or favorable feeling, and 100 degrees very warm or favorable feeling. Understanding the feelings on BLM the question was posed: “How would you rate BLM?” ( $M = 46.94$   $SD = 88.75$ ). The next questions gauges respondent’s feelings of discrimination toward black people. How much discrimination is there in the United States today against each of the following group: Blacks?” 1. A great deal (15.48%) 2. A lot (23.44), 3. A moderate amount (27.09%), 4. A little (13.63%), 5. None at all (2.72%) ( $M = .97$   $SD = 3.61$ ). Finally, respondents were asked about their perception of police involvement; “In general, do the police [treat whites better than blacks, treat them both same, or treat blacks better than whites / treat blacks better than whites, treat them both the same, or treat whites better than blacks]? 1. Treat whites better (25.08%), 2. Treat both the same (17.37%) 3. Treat blacks better (6.84%) ( $M = -.49$   $SD = 2.73$ )” (ANES, “User Guide”).



## Media

As previously stated, social-political activism requires that a person to gather information and then act upon it (Holobrook and Krosnick, 2010). An influencing factor is the person's access to media pertaining to politics. It is possible that a more politically informed respondent will be more active politically. If this is the case, the following question will be analyzed in order to encapsulate the possibility that respondents were more informed thus more active. The next question pertains to information regarding the presidency, "How many times did you read, watch, or listen to any information about the President on the Internet? 1. None (11.94%). 2. Just one or two (13.60%). 3. Several (27.70). 4. A good many (32.15%) (M=1.61 SD=3.35). (ANES, "Use Guide"). Because this study involves respondents' activity online, it is important to understand whether those survey are politically engaged within the online network. For instance, if a person receives information from their computer or phone, then the likelihood they would have the ability to comment, post, or subscribe to social media sources. These questions are set as controls along with the other dependent variables.

The two dependent variables in this study are social media use and posting of political messages. These two variables are dependent upon the independent variables of demographic information pertaining to the survey such as ideology, Extremely Liberal = 3.42%, Liberal = 11.85%, Slightly Liberal = 8.90%, Moderate = 20.96, Slightly Conservative = 11.89, Conservative = 16.46%, Extremely Conservative = 3.89% (M=25.06 SD=39.42), age (M=47.92, SD = 19.87), race (White = 71.33%), sex (Male = 13.11% Female = 14.54%) (M=-.30 SD= 1.16) and education (High School Graduate = 18.97%, Bachelor's degree = 22.36%, Master's degree = 11.68%, Professional School = 2.06%, Doctorate = 2.18%) (M=11.66 SD= 7.30). If social-political activism is an extension of the practice of voting, then white women who are 65 and

older with college education are most likely to participate (PRB, 1996). This paper serves to understand whether social media use for political postings has a relationship with social activism such as boycotting, protesting, or attending a political meeting and feelings regarding BLM, discrimination of blacks, and police treatment of blacks. This paper serves to control for the respondents access to media information and political involvement. People who post on social media about social-political issues have a positive relationships with boycotting, protesting, or attending a political meeting. However, people who post on social media about social-political issues have a negative relationship to feelings regarding BLM, discrimination of blacks, and police treatment of blacks due to racism and ideological dogmatism. The information for social media postings will show a relationship between the activism online to the activism in actualization.

### **Analytical procedures**

Social media postings, posting political messages on social media, social-political activism, and media consumption will be processed in individual regression models. In order to make a quantitative response to the hypothesis social participation on social media their perceptions of BLM, discrimination of blacks, and police treatment is positively related to civic and political engagement.

### **Results**

An OLS regression was run to determine if posting on Facebook about politics or social issues is linked to boycotting of goods and services because of social-political values of that company. The regression finds that sex is negatively associated with posting on Facebook about politics or social issues ( $B = -.08$ ,  $SE = .02$ ,  $p < .000$ ). However, the relationship between age ( $B = 0.00$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p < .967$ ) and posting on Facebook about politics or social issues as not

statistically significant as well as race ( $B = 0.02$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p < .174$ ), and education ( $B = 0.01$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p < .18$ ). Yet, ideology ( $B = 0.00$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p = .000$ ) is statistically significant but ideology does not effect on if posting on Facebook about politics or social issues is linked to boycotting of goods and services because of social-political values of that company. The number of days used social media to learn about the presidential election was positively associated with posting on Facebook about politics or social issues ( $B = 0.08$ ,  $SE = .01$ ,  $p < .000$ ) as well as the recent use of Facebook ( $B = .07$ ,  $SE = .01$ ,  $p < .000$ ). However, feeling thermometer on BLM was statistically significant but did not have an effect boycotting goods and services for political reasons ( $B = .00$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p < .000$ ). This shows that just because users boycotted goods and services does not mean they are supportive or unsupportive of the BLM movement. Yet, police treatment of blacks and whites was positively associated with boycotting goods and services for political reasons and is statistically significant ( $B = .43$ ,  $SE = .01$ ,  $p < .000$ ). What is significant is that people who are boycott goods and services also responded that police officers treat whites better than blacks. Respondents perception of discrimination in the U.S. against blacks was also positively associated with boycotting goods and services for political reasons and is statistically significant ( $B = .24$ ,  $SE = .01$ ,  $p < .000$ ). This means those surveyed who boycott goods and services also responded that blacks face a great deal of discrimination in the U.S. This can be seen in Figure 17. Finally, posting on Facebook about politics or social issues positively associated with boycotting goods and services because of social-political values of that company ( $B = .93$ ,  $SE = .01$ ,  $p < .000$ ). The results can be seen in Figure 5.

Boycotting goods and services is form of activism that requires a person to make the intellectual and physical effort for ideological reasons. Posting on Facebook about politics or social issues is positively associated with boycotting goods and services because of social-

political values of that company. This shows a correlation between the two variables. Keeping other independent variables constant, for every unit increase of posting about politics or social issues then the boycotting goods and services increases by ( $B = .93$ ,  $SE = .01$ ,  $p < .000$ ). The p-value is low enough to find the positive association to be significant, therefore this supports the hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between posting about political-social issue messages on Facebook and a person to boycott goods and services for political or social reasons. The number of days using social media to follow the presidential election had a lower level of positive association with boycotting goods and services than posting about political or social issues on social media. This is also the case with the recent use of Facebook. There is a lower level of positive association with boycotting goods and services than posting about political or social issues on social media. These two controls show that they have an effect, but do not show a causation or correlation. The negative association with sex indicates that there is a difference between males and females. The  $B = -.08$  indicates males are more likely to boycott than females.

An OLS regression was run to determine if posting on Facebook about politics or social issues linked to wearing a campaign button, posting a sign or bumper sticker. The regression finds that sex is statistically insignificant with posting on Facebook about politics or social issues ( $B = 0.00$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p < .352$ ), as well as with the variables of ideology ( $B = 0.00$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p = .548$ ), age ( $B = 0.00$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p < .999$ ), and race ( $B = 0.00$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p < .455$ ). However, the number of days used social media to learn about the presidential election was also positively associated with posting on Facebook about politics or social issues ( $B = 0.05$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p < .000$ ), education ( $B = 0.01$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p < .000$ ), and the recent use of Facebook ( $B = .04$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p < .000$ ). However, feeling thermometer on BLM was statistically significant but did not

have an effect wearing a campaign button, posting a sign or bumper sticker ( $B = .00$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p < .000$ ). This shows that just because users wore a campaign button, posted a sign or bumper sticker does not mean they are supportive or unsupportive of the BLM movement. Yet, police treatment of blacks and whites was positively associated with wearing a campaign button, posting a sign or bumper sticker and is statistically significant ( $B = .40$ ,  $SE = .01$ ,  $p < .000$ ). What is significant is that people who wearing a campaign button, posting a sign or bumper sticker also responded that police officers treat whites better than blacks. Respondent's perception of discrimination in the U.S. against blacks was also positively associated with wearing a campaign button, posting a sign or bumper sticker and is statistically significant ( $B = .23$ ,  $SE = .01$ ,  $p < .000$ ). This can be seen in Figure 18. Finally, posting on Facebook about politics or social issues positively associated with wearing a campaign button, posting a sign or bumper sticker ( $B = .96$ ,  $SE = .01$ ,  $p < .000$ ). The results can be seen in Figure 6.

Wearing a campaign button, posting a sign or bumper sticker is a form of activism that requires a person to take a distinct action for ideological reason. Posting on Facebook about politics or social issues is positively associated with wearing a campaign button, posting a sign or bumper sticker. Keeping other independent variables constant, for every unit increase of posting about politics or social issues then the wearing a campaign button, posting a sign or bumper sticker increases by ( $B = .96$ ,  $SE = .01$ ,  $p < .000$ ). The p-value is low enough to find the positive association to be significant, therefore this supports the hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between posting about political-social issue messages on Facebook and a wearing a campaign button, posting a sign or bumper sticker. The number of days using social media to follow the presidential election had a lower level of positive association with wearing a campaign button, posting a sign or bumper sticker than posting about political or social issues on

social media. This is also the case with the recent use of Facebook; there is a lower level of positive association with wearing a campaign button, posting a sign or bumper sticker than posting about political or social issues on social media. These two controls show that they have an effect, but do not show a causation or correlation. The positive association with education indicates that for every incremental increase in education they are more likely to wear a campaign button, posting a sign or bumper sticker. However, feeling thermometer on BLM was statistically significant but did not have an effect wearing a campaign button, posting a sign or bumper sticker. Yet, police treatment of blacks and whites was positively associated with wearing a campaign button, posting a sign or bumper sticker and is statistically significant. Respondent's perception of discrimination in the U.S. against blacks was also positively associated with wearing a campaign button, posting a sign or bumper sticker and is statistically significant.

An OLS regression was run to determine if watching if posting on Facebook about politics or social issues is linked to attending political meetings, rallies, or speeches. The relationship between sex and posting on Facebook about politics or social issues as not statistically significant ( $B = -.01$ ,  $SE = .03$ ,  $p < .294$ ), ideology ( $B = .00$ ,  $SE = .01$ ,  $p = .679$ ), age ( $B = 0.00$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p < .638$ ), and race ( $B = 0.00$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p < .557$ ). However, the number of days used social media to learn about the presidential election was positively associated with posting on Facebook about politics or social issues ( $B = 0.04$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p < .000$ ), education ( $B = 0.01$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p < .00$ ), and the recent use of Facebook ( $B = .04$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p < .000$ ). However, feeling thermometer on BLM was statistically significant but did not have an effect attending political meetings, rallies, or speeches ( $B = .00$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p < .000$ ). This shows that just because users attended political meetings, rallies, or speeches does not mean they are supportive or

unsupportive of the BLM movement. How police treatment of blacks and whites was positively associated with attending political meetings, rallies, or speeches and is statistically significant ( $B = .40$ ,  $SE = .01$ ,  $p < .000$ ). Respondents' perception of discrimination in the U.S. against blacks was also positively associated with attending a political meetings, rallies, or speeches and is statistically significant ( $B = .23$ ,  $SE = .01$ ,  $p < .000$ ). This means those surveyed who attended political meetings, rallies, or speeches also responded that black's face a great deal of discrimination in the U.S. Results can be found in Figure 16. Finally, posting on Facebook about politics or social issues is positively associated to attending political meetings, rallies, or speeches ( $B = .96$ ,  $SE = .01$ ,  $p < .000$ ). The results can be seen in Figure 8.

Attending political meetings, rallies, or speeches is a form of civil engagement and therefore is a form of social activism. Posting on Facebook about politics or social issues is positively associated with wearing attending political meetings, rallies, or speeches. Keeping other independent variables constant, for every unit increase of posting about politics or social issues then attending political meetings, rallies, or speeches increases by ( $B = .96$ ,  $SE = .01$ ,  $p < .000$ ). The p-value is low enough to find the positive association to be significant, therefore this supports the hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between posting about political-social issue messages on Facebook and attending political meetings, rallies, or speeches. The number of days using social media to follow the presidential election had a lower level of positive association with attending political meetings, rallies, or speeches than posting about political or social issues on social media. This is also the case with the recent use of Facebook; there is a lower level of positive association with attending political meetings, rallies, or speeches than posting about political or social issues on social media. These two controls show that they have an effect, but do not show a causation or correlation. The positive association with education

indicates that for every incremental increase in education they are more likely to attend political meetings, rallies, or speeches. However, feeling thermometer on BLM was statistically significant but did not have an effect attending political meetings, rallies, or speeches. How police treatment of blacks and whites was positively associated with attending political meetings, rallies, or speeches and is statistically significant. Respondent's perception of discrimination in the U.S. against blacks was also positively associated with attending a political meetings, rallies, or speeches and is statistically significant.

An OLS regression was run to determine if posting on Facebook about politics or social issues is linked attending a protest or a march. The regression finds that sex is not statistically significant with posting on Facebook about politics or social issues ( $B = 0.00$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p < .173$ ), ideology ( $B = 0.00$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p = .093$ ), age ( $B = 0.00$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p < .967$ ), and race ( $B = 0.01$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p < .188$ ). Yet, education ( $B = 0.00$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p < .000$ ) is statistically significant but ideology does not effect on if posting on Facebook about politics or social issues is linked attending a protest or a march. The number of days used social media to learn about the presidential election was also positively associated with posting on Facebook about politics or social issues ( $B = 0.05$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p < .000$ ) as well as the recent use of Facebook ( $B = .04$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p < .000$ ). The results can be seen in Figure 6. However, feeling thermometer on BLM was statistically significant but did not have an effect on joining a protest march ( $B = .00$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p < .000$ ). This shows that just because users joined a protest or march does not mean they are supportive or unsupportive of the BLM movement. Yet, police treatment of blacks and whites was positively associated with joining a protest march and is statistically significant ( $B = .40$ ,  $SE = .01$ ,  $p < .000$ ). What is significant is that people who join a protest or march also responded that police officers treat whites better than blacks Respondents perception of discrimination in the



U.S. against blacks was also positively associated with joining a protest march and is statistically significant ( $B = .23$ ,  $SE = .01$ ,  $p < .000$ ). This means those surveyed who joined a protest march also responded that black's face a great deal of discrimination in the U.S. Results can be found in Figure 15. Finally, posting on Facebook about politics or social issues positively associated with boycotting goods and services because of social-political values of that company ( $B = .98$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p < .000$ ).

Attending a protest or a march is a form of social activism that is physically done in order to promote or oppose a certain ideal, political agenda, legislative or judicial decision. Posting on Facebook about politics or social issues is positively associated with attending a protest or a march. Keeping other independent variables constant, for every unit increase of posting about politics or social issues then attending protest or a march by increases by ( $B = .98$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p < .000$ ). The p-value is low enough to find the positive association to be significant, therefore this supports the hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between posting about political-social issue messages on Facebook and attending a protest or a march. The number of days using social media to follow the presidential election had a lower level of positive association with attending a protest or a march than posting about political or social issues on social media. This is also the case with the recent use of Facebook; there is a lower level of positive association with attending a protest or a march than posting about political or social issues on social media. These two controls show that they have an effect, but do not show a causation or correlation. However, feeling thermometer on BLM was statistically significant but did not have an effect on joining a protest march ( $B = .00$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p < .000$ ). Yet, police treatment of blacks and whites was positively associated with joining a protest march and is statistically significant. Respondents'

perception of discrimination in the U.S. against blacks was also positively associated with joining a protest march and is statistically significant.

An OLS regression was run to determine if posting on Facebook about politics or social issues is linked to signing a petition in the last twelve months. Respondents were not specific in their response as to whether the petition was online or in person. Either way, signing a petition requires participation that goes beyond liking a status or retweeting a post. For this research, they are qualitatively the same. The regression finds that sex is not statistically significant with posting on Facebook about politics or social issues ( $B = -.01, SE = .01, p < .08$ ), as well as with the variables of age ( $B = 0.00, SE = .00, p < .611$ ), race ( $B = 0.00, SE = .00, p < .372$ ), and education ( $B = 0.00, SE = .00, p < .75$ ). Yet, ideology ( $B = .00, SE = .00, p = .000$ ) is statistically significant but does not effect on if posting on Facebook about politics or social issues is linked to signing a petition in the last twelve months. However, the number of days used social media to learn about the presidential election was also positively associated with posting on Facebook about politics or social issues ( $B = 0.03, SE = .00, p < .000$ ) as well as the recent use of Facebook ( $B = .04, SE = .00, p < .000$ ). However, feeling thermometer on BLM was statistically significant but did not have an effect on signing a petition in the last twelve months ( $B = .00, SE = .00, p < .000$ ). This shows that just because respondents signed a petition in the last twelve months does not mean they are supportive or unsupportive of the BLM movement. Yet, police treatment of blacks and whites was positively associated with signing a petition in the last twelve months is statistically significant ( $B = .37, SE = .01, p < .000$ ). What is significant is that people who signed a petition also responded that police officers treat whites better than blacks. Respondents perception of discrimination in the U.S. against blacks was also positively associated with signing a petition in the last twelve months and is statistically significant ( $B = .23, SE = .01, p <$

.000). This means those surveyed who signed a petition in the last twelve months also responded that blacks face a great deal of discrimination in the U.S. Results can be found in Figure 19.

Finally, posting on Facebook about politics or social issues positively associated with signing a petition in the last twelve months ( $B = .95$ ,  $SE = .01$ ,  $p < .000$ ). The results can be seen in Figure 7.

Like the motivations behind attending a protest or a march, signing a petition is a form of social activism that is physically done in order to promote or oppose a certain ideal, political agenda, legislative or judicial decision. Posting on Facebook about politics or social issues is positively associated with signing a petition. Keeping other independent variables constant, for every unit increase of posting about politics or social issues then signing a petition in the last twelve months increases by ( $B = .95$ ,  $SE = .01$ ,  $p < .000$ ). The p-value is low enough to find the positive association to be significant, therefore this supports the hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between posting about political-social issue messages on Facebook and signing a petition. The number of days using social media to follow the presidential election had a lower level of positive association with signing a petition in the last twelve months than posting about political or social issues on social media. This is also the case with the recent use of Facebook; there is a lower level of positive association with signing a petition in the last twelve months than posting about political or social issues on social media. These two controls show that they have an effect, but do not show a causation or correlation. However, the descriptive variables do not have any effect on signing a petition. However, feeling thermometer on BLM was statistically significant but did not have an effect on signing a petition in the last twelve months. Yet, police treatment of blacks and whites was positively associated with signing a petition in the last twelve months is statistically significant. Respondent's perception of

discrimination in the U.S. against blacks was also positively associated with signing a petition in the last twelve months and is statistically significant.

## **Conclusion**

Raine et. al (2012, p. 1) determined “66% of social media users have employed the platforms to post their thoughts about civic and political issues, react to others’ postings, press friends to act on issues and vote, follow candidates, ‘like’ and link to others’ content, and belong to groups formed on social networking sites.” Raine’s analysis indicates that respondents to her study were highly active online in engaging in social-political issues and does not reflect the results of the research results. However, it does indicate that people are politically active online. The following hypothesis within the study of social participation on social media is positively associated to civic and political engagement, however, the positive association is quite low. This is important because it shows that posting about political or social issues online does not directly encourage persons to be socially active in the real world. Nor does a person’s feelings toward BLM encourage or discourage physical social-political involvement. If Raine et al’s study claim is correct and can be generalized to voters that more people are engaged online regarding political and social issues than the percentage of voters during presidential election then there is some sort of disconnect. This study shows that there is a slight relationship between posting about issues on social media and physically participating in protests or marches, attending rallies, signing petitions, wearing a campaign sticker or putting up a sign, or boycotting a product. However, this positive relationship does not correlate to a positive relationship or engagement in regards to BLM.

The second part of the hypothesis failed; it determined that there is a positive relationship between respondents perceptions of how police treat people of color and the discrimination they face and respondents physically participating in protests or marches, attending rallies, signing petitions, wearing a campaign sticker or putting up a sign, or boycotting a product. This paper serves to underscore the infectious nature of institutionalized racism and its mal effect on social-political activism and the data for social media postings demonstrated a positive relationship between the activism online to the activism outside of the digital realm. Corlett (1998, p. 29) argues that ideological dogmatism in regards to protest can limit protestors ability to support racial issues. Therefore, Corlett's analysis of institutional racism in regards to this study was not applicable because respondents were partially aware of the discrimination faced by African-Americans. The research results do not fully encompass the issue of institutional racism, nor does this research answer whether politically and socially active individuals online are active in the real physical world.

BLM exists in the social-political context of the present. The public and private spheres of information are diverging on social media networks; globally people are active online at all times. On November 19, 2015 the student coordinated a BLM rally which took place on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's campus green space. The rally was sparked by the institutional racism affection millions of people of color in the United States, by the hashtag "BLM", by the grassroots founders and organizers Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, the local organizers of the Gloria Kimbulu and Dannielle Young, by the 40.8 million tweets and 100,000 web links, and by those who participated online and indeed in person.

Christensen indicates that there is no way to measure slacktivism. Slacktivism is that of which persons are active online yet refrain from being active in the real world. By looking a

respondents answers to their activism, this paper attempted to dispel this assumption. However, Christensen is right in his determination that people “slack” when it comes to doing “real work.” Finally, in regards to limitation of the study could be social desirability bias in the respondents’ answers to their civil engagement. This was a concern of this study because social desirability effects respondents’ answers to voter participation. It is possible people answered that they were physically socially and politically active when in fact they were not, yet were determined to satisfy societies’ standard of civil engagement.

This study could be expanded by increasing the level of respondents over a course of years. ANES’s data sets are administered yearly and it would be interesting to look at persons’ social media activity and political and social participation as the years continue. This would be especially interesting considering the dramatic political terrain of the Trump Administration, gridlock in Congress, the progress of BLM, and the increased activism online.

“The aspiration for Black Liberation cannot be separated from what happens in the United States as a whole. Black life cannot be transformed while the rest of the country burns. The fires consuming the United States are stoked by widespread alienation of low-wage and meaningless work, unaffordable rents, suffocating debt, and poverty...The struggle for Black liberation requires understanding the origins and nature of black oppression and racism...Black people in America cannot “get free” alone. Black liberation is bound up with the project of human liberation and social transformation.”

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor,  
*From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*

## Figures

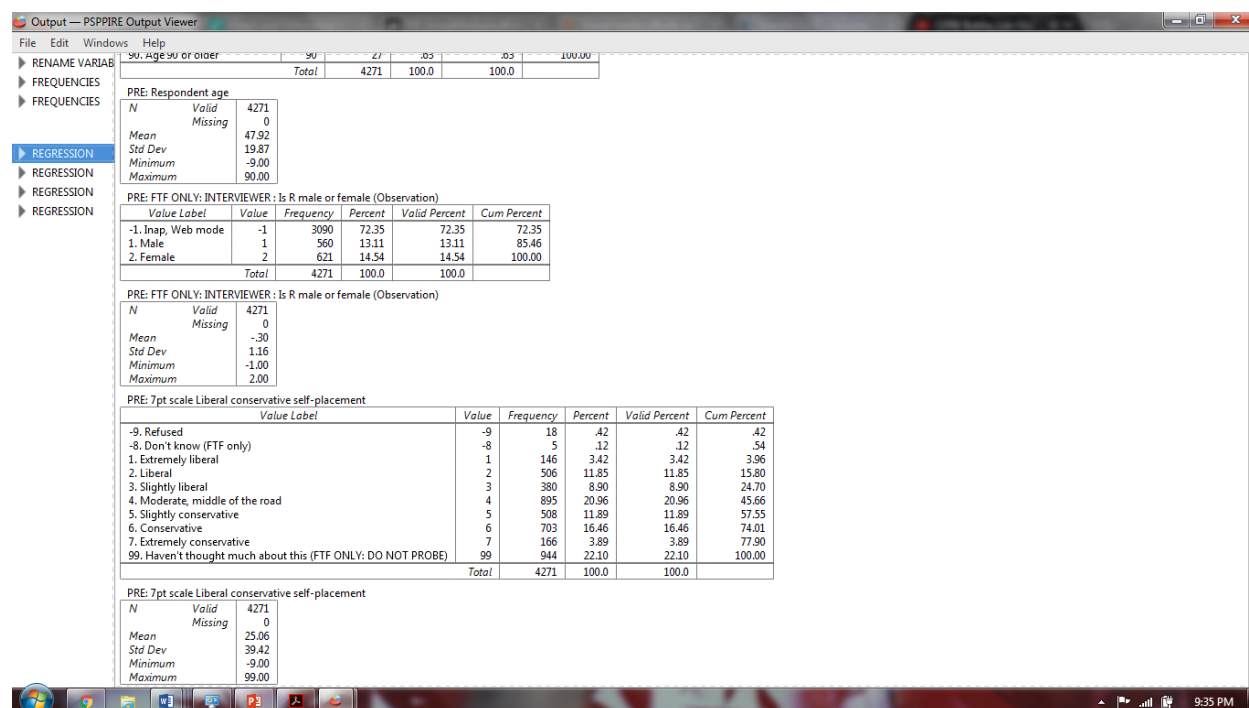


Figure 1. Age, Sex, & Ideology

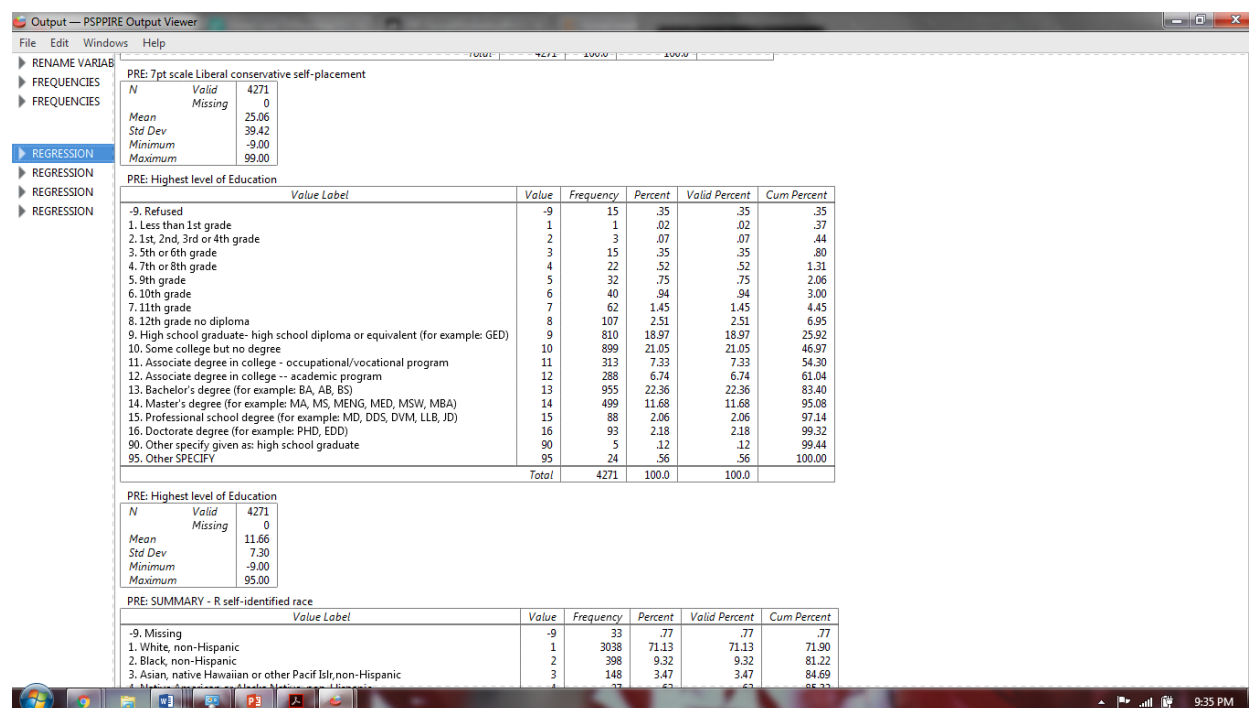


Figure 2. Education

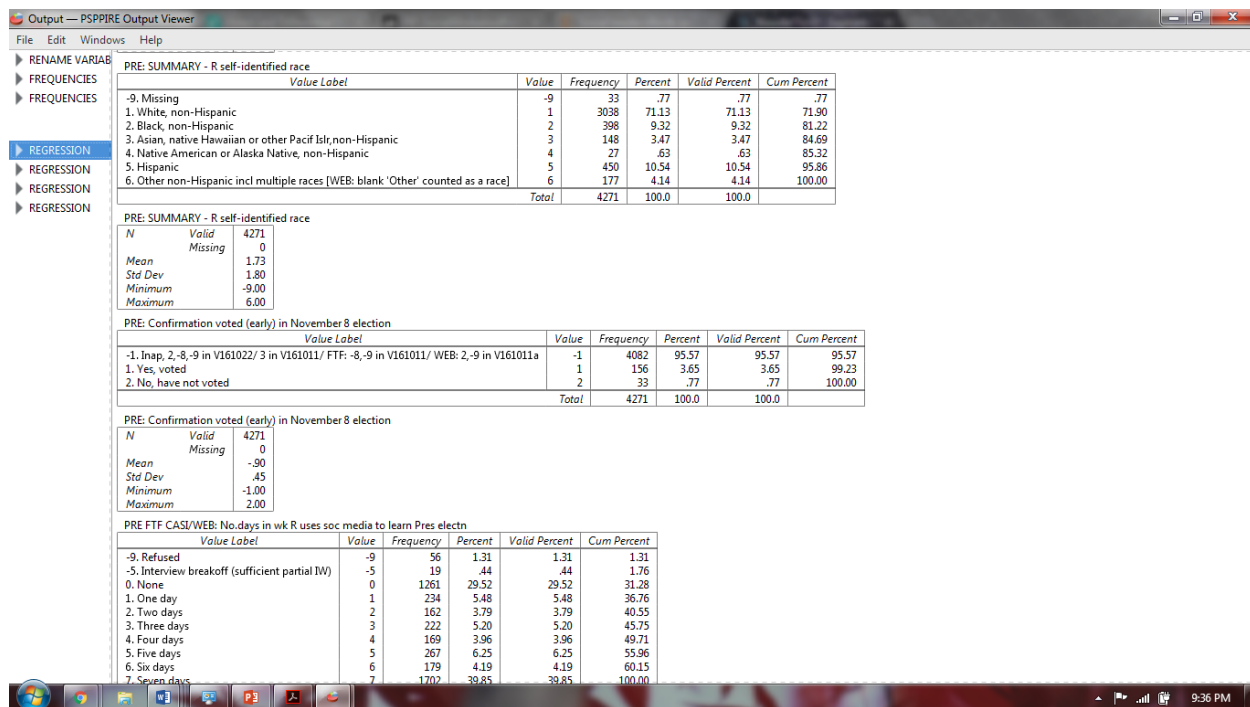


Figure 3. Race &amp; Social Media use for Presidential election

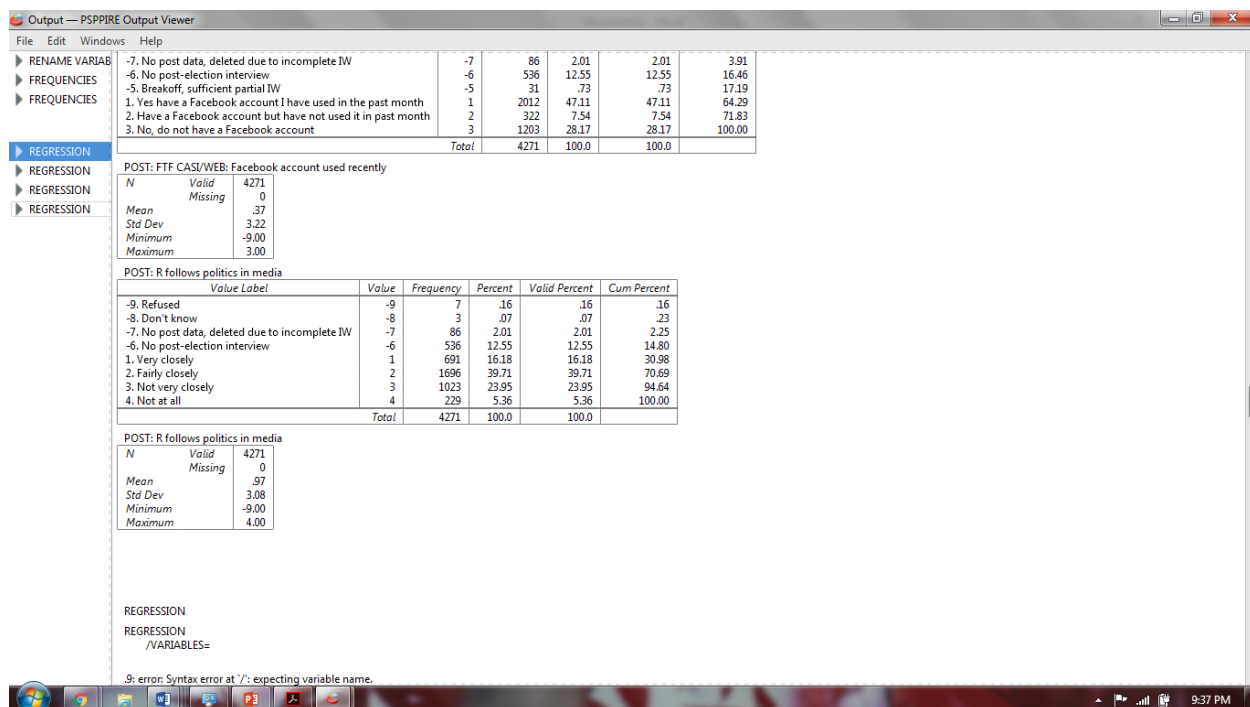


Figure 4. Facebook account use &amp; Follows politics in media



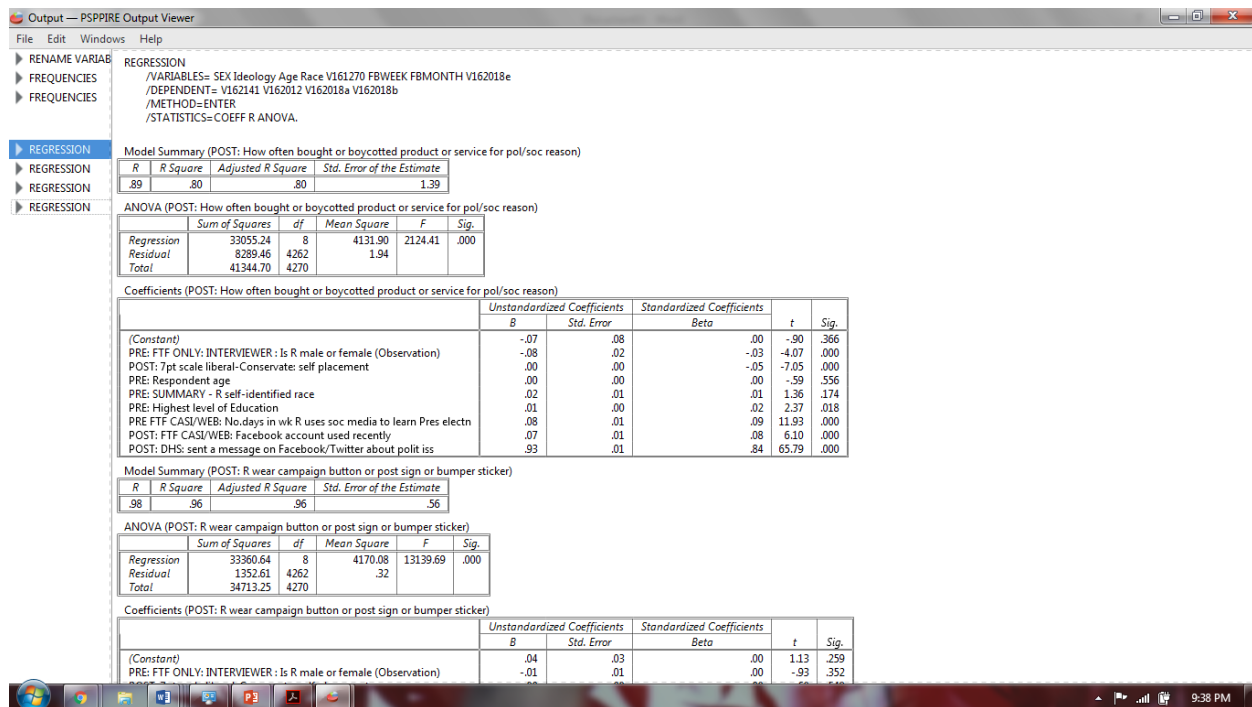


Figure 5. Boycotting

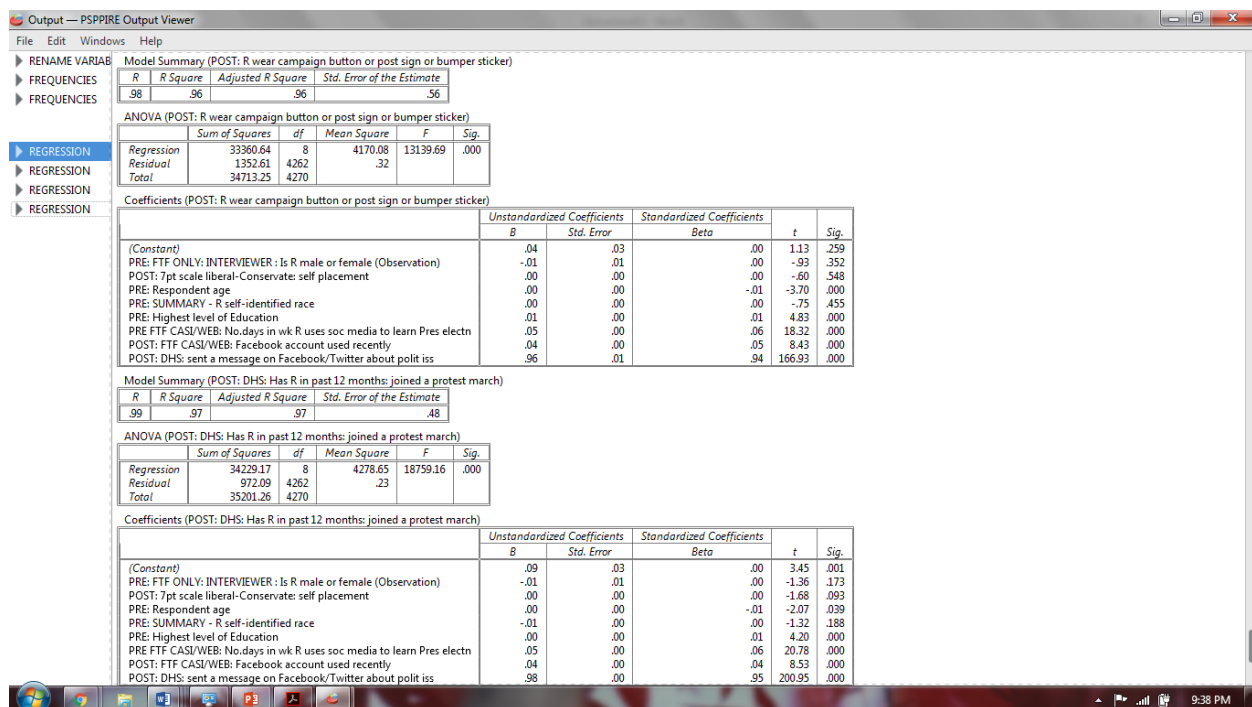


Figure 6. Campaign Button &amp; Protest

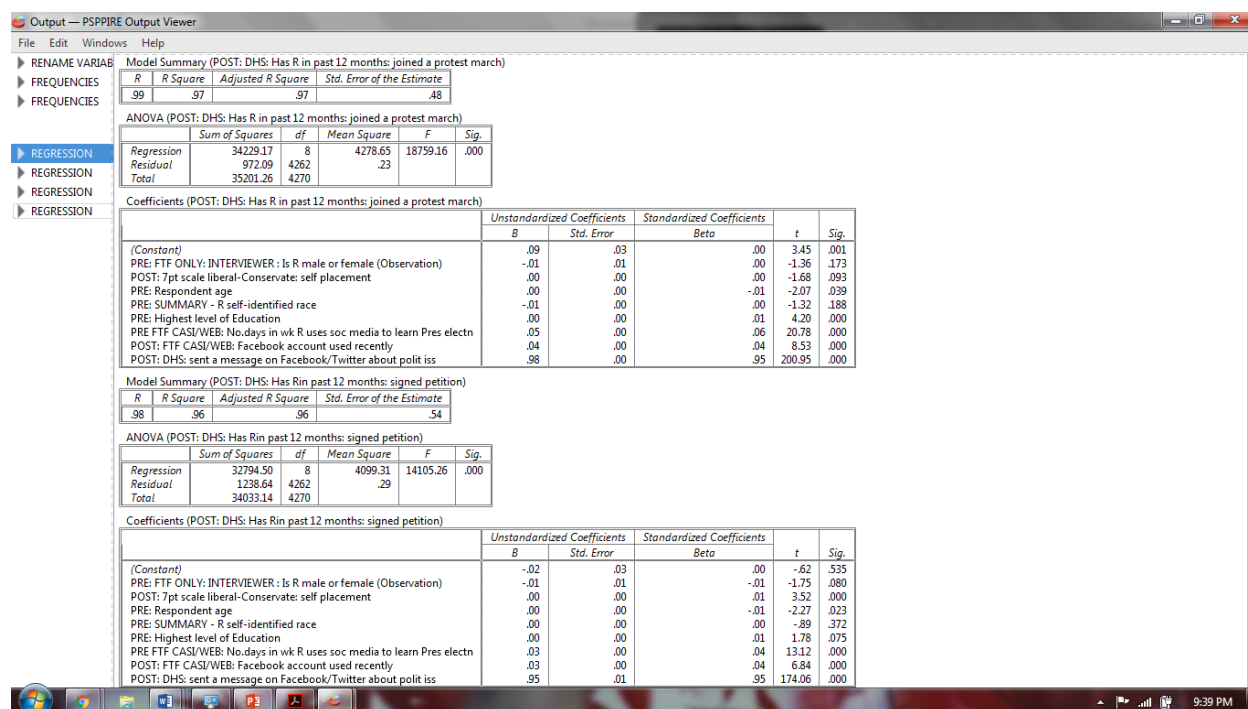


Figure 7. Petition

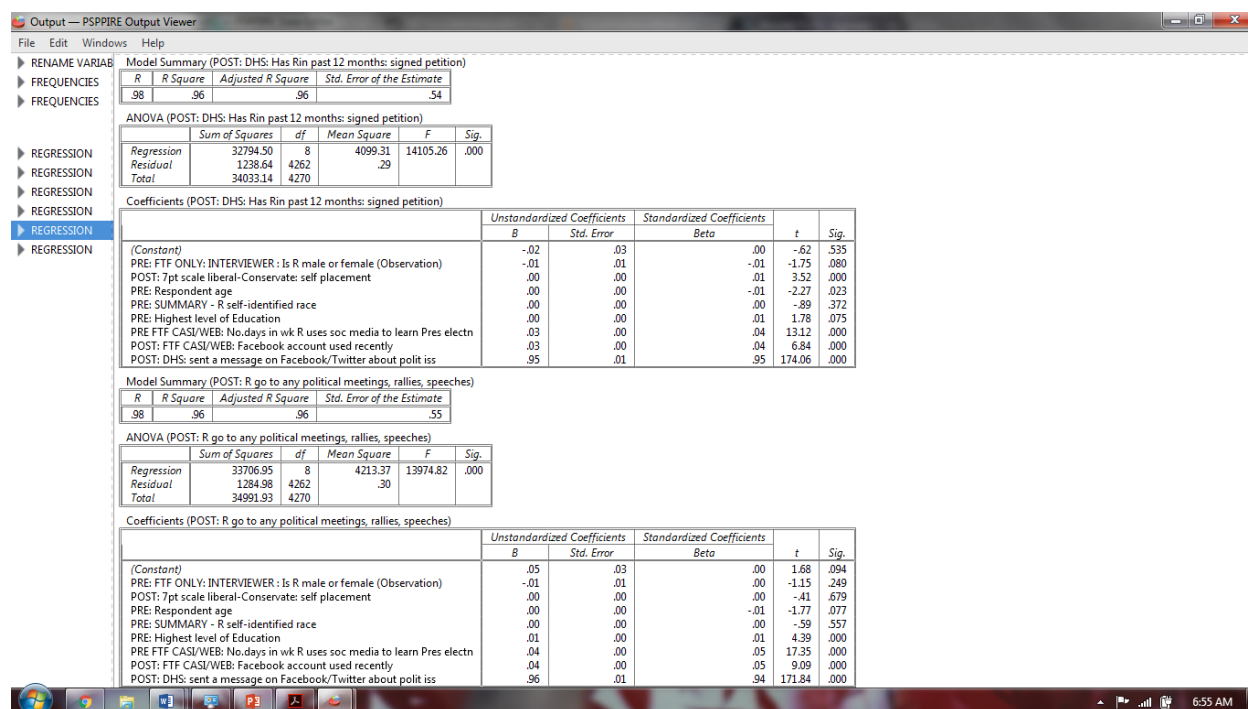


Figure 8. Attended political meetings, rallies, speeches.

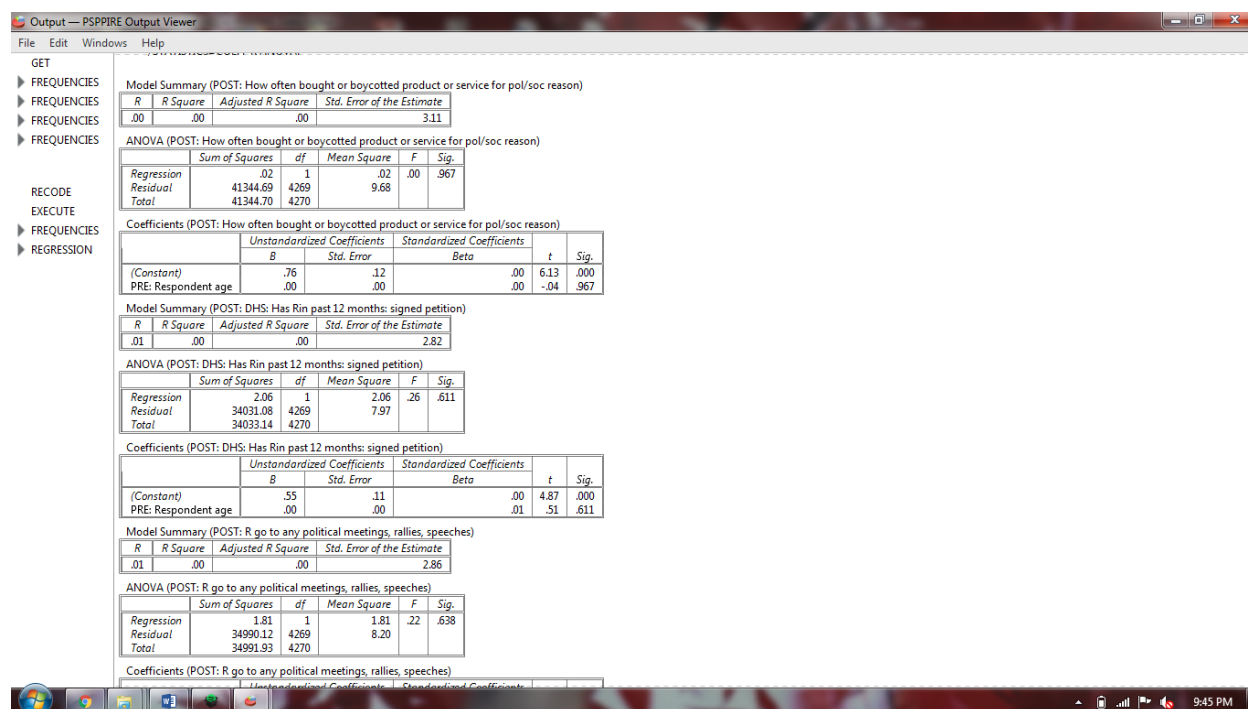


Figure 9. Age Updated Figure

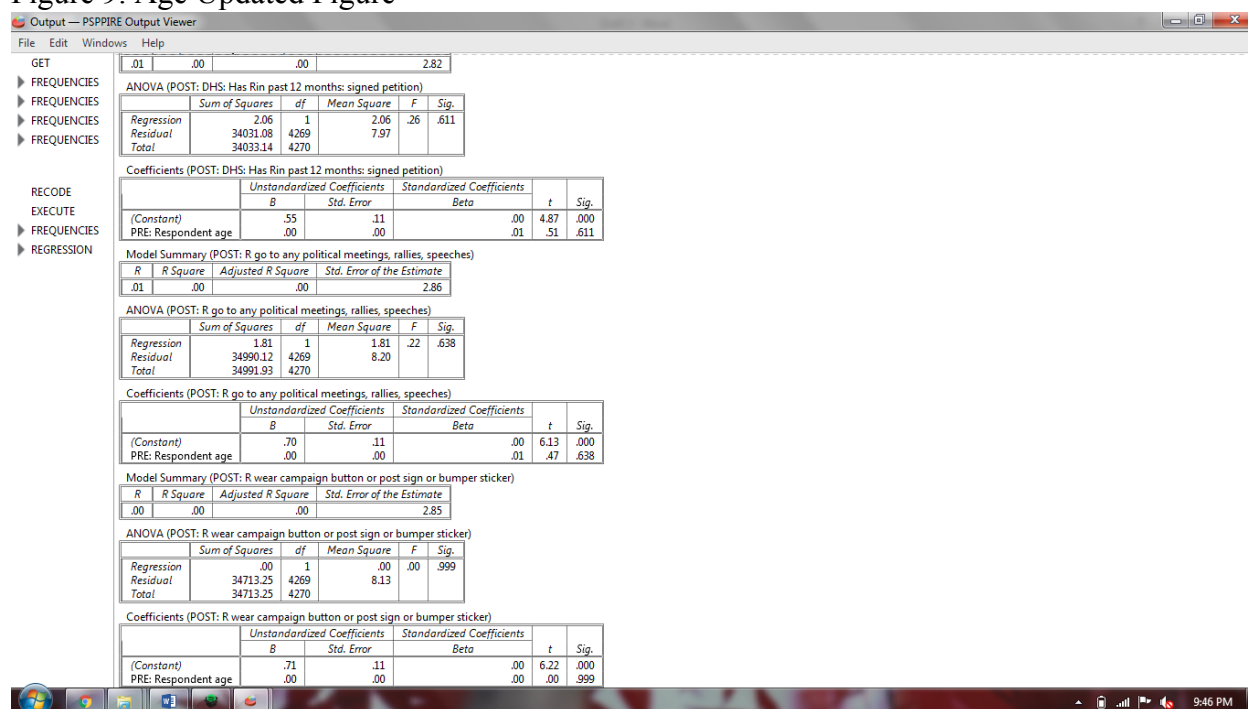


Figure 10. Age Update (2)

Output — PSPPIRE Output Viewer

File Edit Windows Help

GET

► FREQUENCIES

► FREQUENCIES

► FREQUENCIES

POST: Feeling thermometer: BLACK LIVES MATTER

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
-9. Refused	-9	28	.66	.66	.66
-7. No post data, deleted due to incomplete IW	-7	86	2.01	2.01	2.67
-6. No post-election interview	-6	536	12.55	12.55	15.22
	0	510	11.94	11.94	27.16
	1	49	1.15	1.15	28.31
	2	40	.94	.94	29.24
	3	17	.40	.40	29.64
	4	4	.09	.09	29.74
	5	13	.30	.30	30.04
	6	6	.14	.14	30.18
	7	2	.05	.05	30.23
	8	2	.05	.05	30.27
	9	9	.21	.21	30.48
	10	17	.40	.40	30.88
	11	2	.05	.05	30.93
	12	4	.09	.09	31.02
	13	1	.02	.02	31.05
	14	4	.09	.09	31.14
	15	194	4.54	4.54	35.68
	16	30	.70	.70	36.38
	17	14	.33	.33	36.71
	18	12	.28	.28	36.99
	19	2	.05	.05	37.04
	20	8	.19	.19	37.23
	21	3	.07	.07	37.30
	22	3	.07	.07	37.37
	25	6	.14	.14	37.51
	26	3	.07	.07	37.58
	27	4	.09	.09	37.67
	28	2	.05	.05	37.72
	29	6	.14	.14	37.86
	30	179	4.19	4.19	42.05
	31	14	.33	.33	42.38
	32	12	.28	.28	42.66
	33	4	.09	.09	42.75
	34	4	.09	.09	42.85
	35	10	.23	.23	43.08
	36	2	.05	.05	43.13
	37	4	.09	.09	43.22
	38	1	.02	.02	43.25

10:43 PM

Output — PSPPIRE Output Viewer

File Edit Windows Help

GET

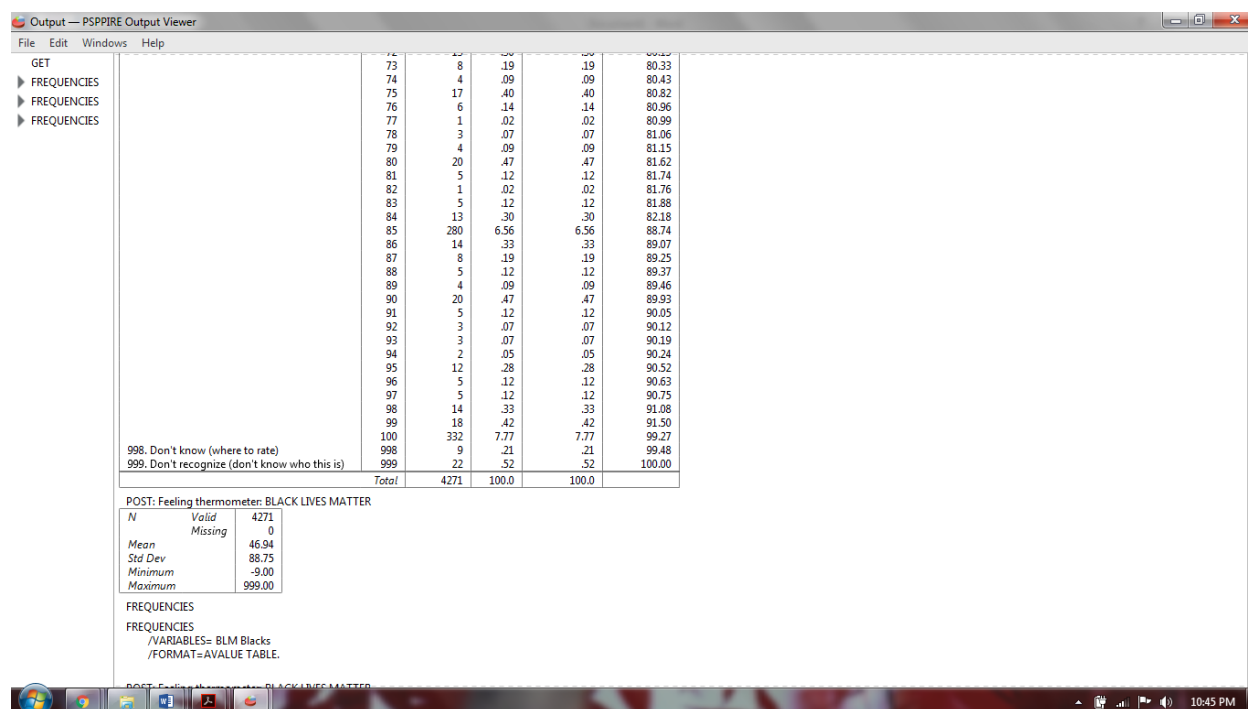
► FREQUENCIES

► FREQUENCIES

► FREQUENCIES

37	4	.09	.09	43.24
38	1	.02	.02	43.25
39	4	.09	.09	43.34
40	249	5.83	5.83	49.17
41	27	.63	.63	49.80
42	8	.19	.19	49.99
43	3	.07	.07	50.06
44	8	.19	.19	50.25
45	10	.23	.23	50.48
46	3	.07	.07	50.55
47	5	.12	.12	50.67
48	4	.09	.09	50.76
49	8	.19	.19	50.95
50	486	11.38	11.38	62.33
51	46	1.08	1.08	63.40
52	22	.52	.52	63.92
53	6	.14	.14	64.06
54	4	.09	.09	64.15
55	11	.26	.26	64.41
56	4	.09	.09	64.50
57	11	.26	.26	64.76
58	4	.09	.09	64.86
59	15	.35	.35	65.21
60	235	5.50	5.50	70.71
61	21	.49	.49	71.20
62	10	.23	.23	71.44
63	2	.05	.05	71.48
64	5	.12	.12	71.60
65	9	.21	.21	71.81
66	4	.09	.09	71.90
67	6	.14	.14	72.04
68	8	.19	.19	72.23
69	7	.16	.16	72.40
70	295	6.91	6.91	79.30
71	23	.54	.54	79.84
72	13	.30	.30	80.15
73	8	.19	.19	80.33
74	4	.09	.09	80.43
75	17	.40	.40	80.82
76	6	.14	.14	80.96
77	1	.02	.02	80.99
78	3	.07	.07	81.06
79	4	.09	.09	81.15
80	20	.47	.47	81.62
81	5	.12	.12	81.74
82	1	.02	.02	81.76
83	5	.12	.12	81.88

10:44 PM



Figures 11, 12, &amp; 13. Black Lives Matter

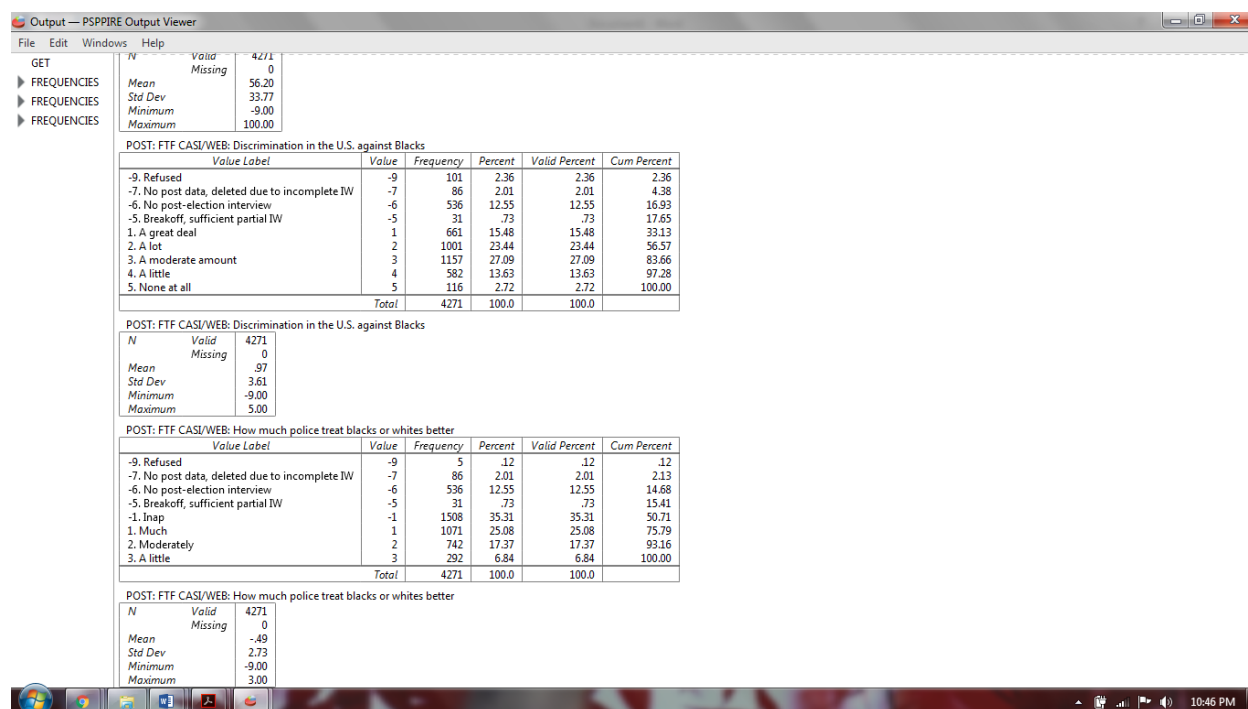


Figure 14. Discrimination in the US against Blacks and Police Treatment

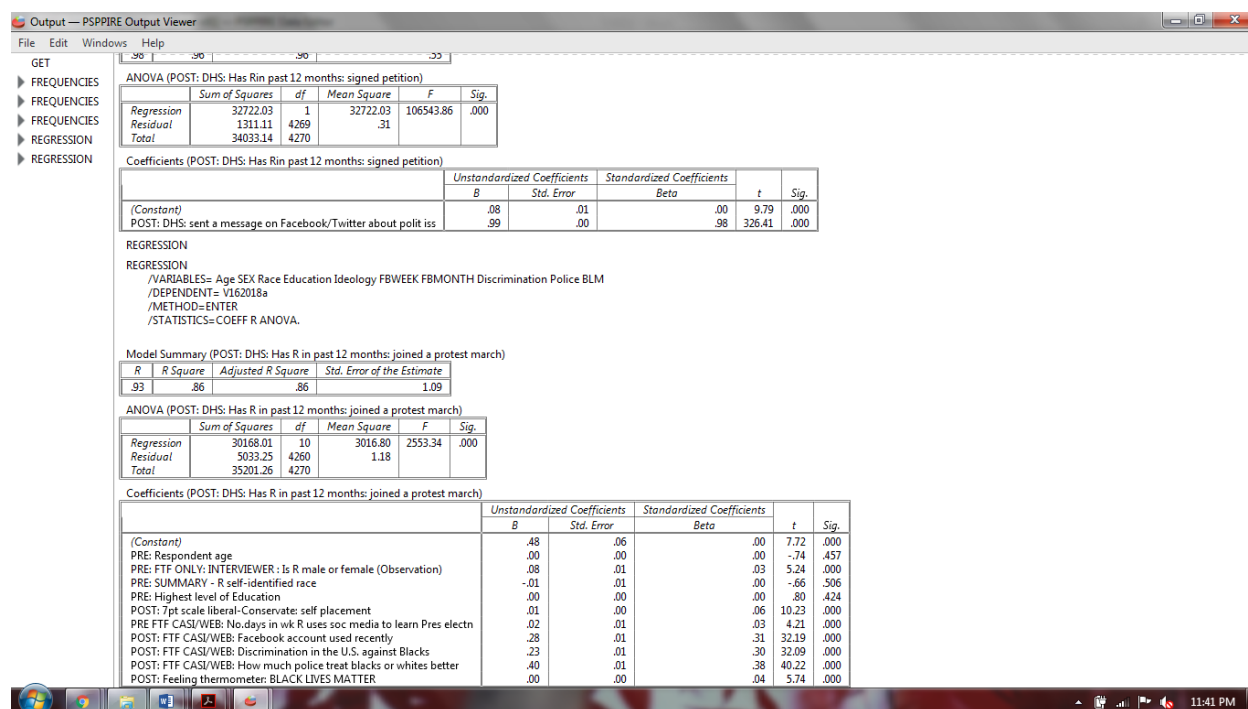


Figure 15. Protest March (Update)

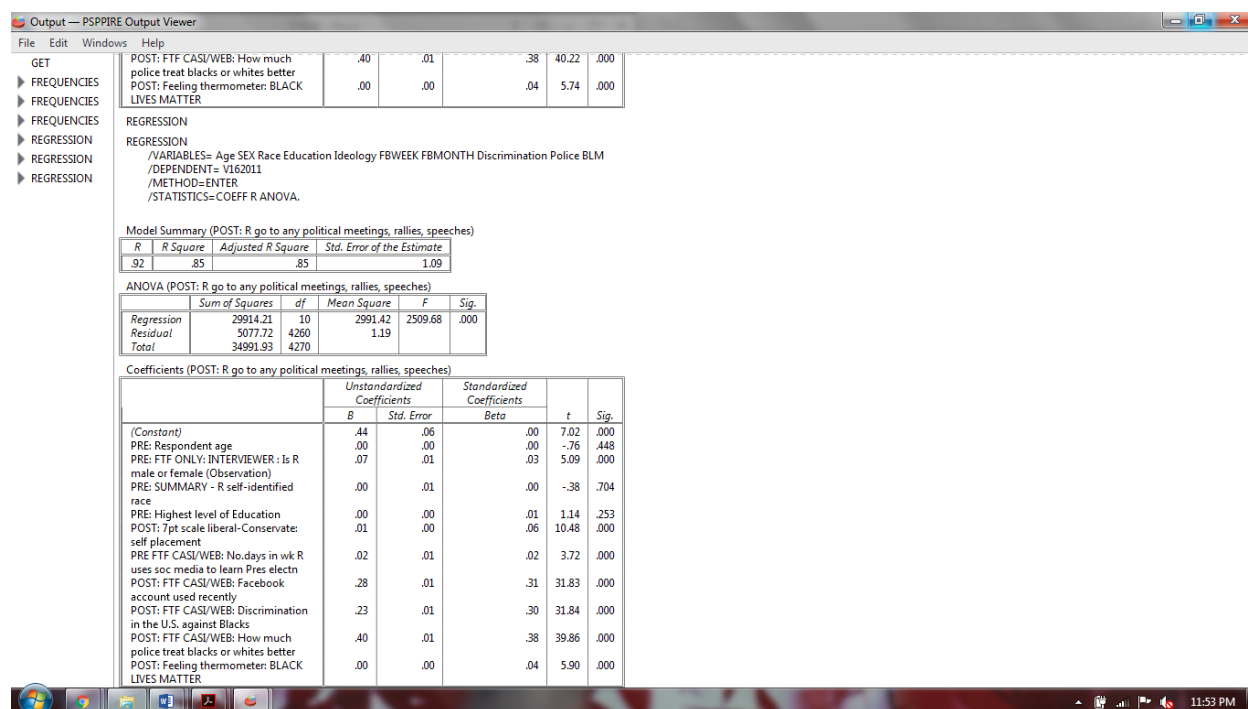


Figure 16. Political Meetings (Update)

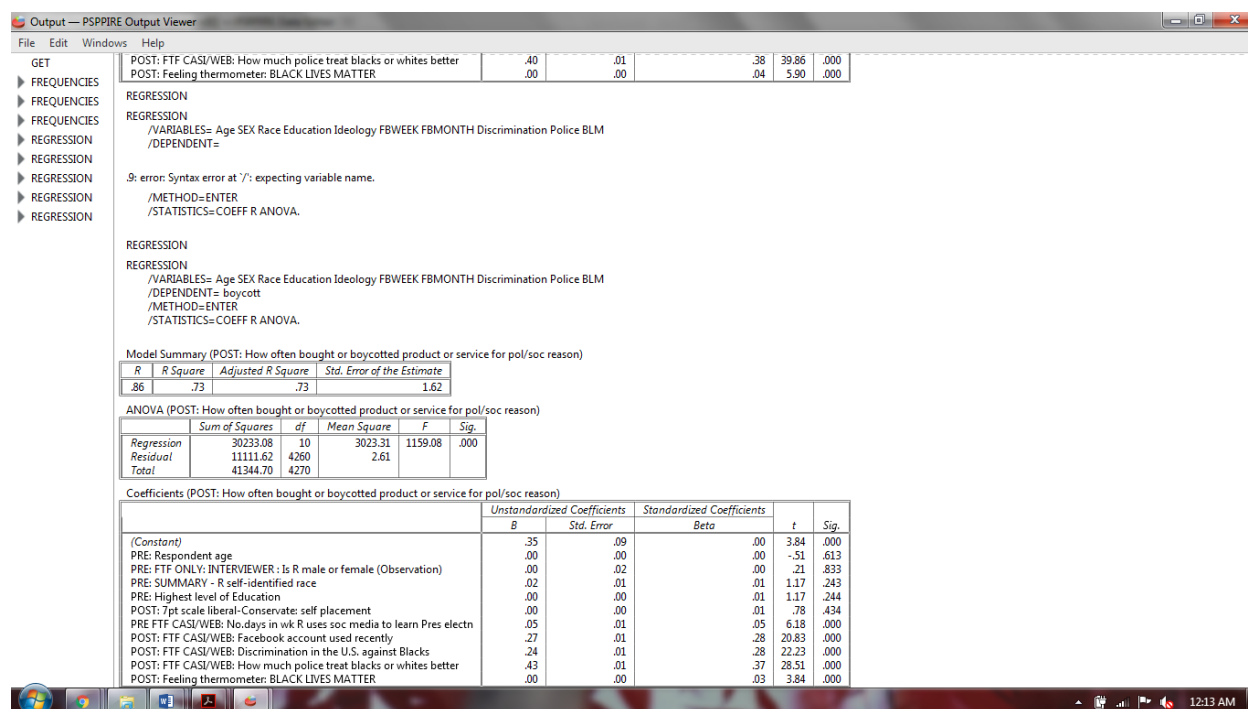


Figure 17. Boycott (Update)

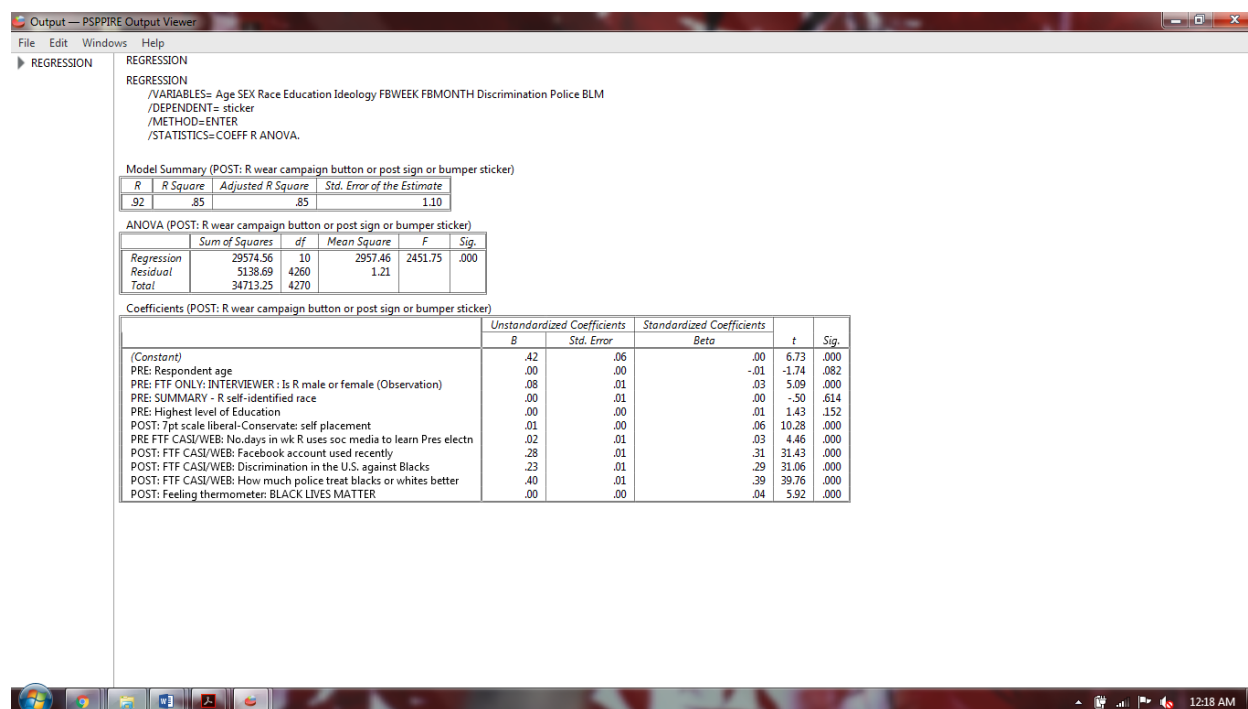


Figure 18. Campaign button, post sign, or bumper sticker (Update)

Output — PSPPIRE Output Viewer

File Edit Windows Help

► REGRESSION

► REGRESSION

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	.42	.06	.00		6.73	.000
PRE: Respondent age	.00	.00	-.01		-1.74	.082
PRE: FTF ONLY: INTERVIEWER : Is R male or female (Observation)	.08	.01	.03		5.09	.000
PRE: SUMMARY - R self-identified race	.00	.01	.00		-.50	.614
PRE: Highest level of Education	.00	.00	.01		1.43	.152
POST: 7pt scale liberal-Conservative: self placement	.01	.00	.06		10.28	.000
PRE FTF CASI/WEB: No.days in wk R uses soc media to learn Pres electn	.02	.01	.03		4.46	.000
POST: FTF CASI/WEB: Facebook account used recently	.28	.01	.31		31.43	.000
POST: FTF CASI/WEB: Discrimination in the U.S. against Blacks	.23	.01	.29		31.06	.000
POST: FTF CASI/WEB: How much police treat blacks or whites better	.40	.01	.39		39.76	.000
POST: Feeling thermometer: BLACK LIVES MATTER	.00	.00	.04		5.92	.000

REGRESSION

REGRESSION

/VARIABLES= Age SEX Race Education Ideology FBWEEK FBMONTH Discrimination Police BLM

/DEPENDENT= petition

/METHOD=ENTER

/STATISTICS= COEFF R ANOVA.

Model Summary (POST: DHS: Has Rin past 12 months: signed petition)

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.92	.84	.84	1.13

ANOVA (POST: DHS: Has Rin past 12 months: signed petition)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	28636.01	10	2863.60	2260.26	.000
Residual	5397.13	4260	1.27		
Total	34033.14	4270			

Coefficients (POST: DHS: Has Rin past 12 months: signed petition)

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	.33	.06	.00		5.18	.000
PRE: Respondent age	.00	.00	-.01		-.95	.344
PRE: FTF ONLY: INTERVIEWER : Is R male or female (Observation)	.07	.02	.03		4.85	.000
PRE: SUMMARY - R self-identified race	.00	.01	.00		-.45	.655
PRE: Highest level of Education	.00	.00	.00		-.06	.955
POST: 7pt scale liberal-Conservative: self placement	.01	.00	.08		12.14	.000
PRE FTF CASI/WEB: No.days in wk R uses soc media to learn Pres electn	.01	.01	.01		2.05	.041
POST: FTF CASI/WEB: Facebook account used recently	.28	.01	.32		31.46	.000
POST: FTF CASI/WEB: Discrimination in the U.S. against Blacks	.23	.01	.30		30.74	.000
POST: FTF CASI/WEB: How much police treat blacks or whites better	.37	.01	.36		35.74	.000
POST: Feeling thermometer: BLACK LIVES MATTER	.00	.00	.03		5.27	.000

Figure 19. Signed Petition in Twelve Months (Update)



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